

02/27/2011

Re: Testimony Opposing DCF Budgetary Reduction Plan to Cut DCF Parole Staff

Dear Appropriations Committee,

My Name is Scott J. Hartan and I have been employed by the Department of Children and Families for almost 12 years as a Parole Social Worker. I first would like to thank the Appropriations Committee for taking the time to read my testimony in regards to DCF's proposal to increase parole caseloads by the associated reduction of 22 Parole Social Workers. The Budget proposal is located in Governor Malloy's Budget Summary under the Department of Children and Families on page B-140 under Recommended Significant Changes. DCF Juvenile Parole Services is responsible for providing and ensuring community safety through the supervision and treatment to all youth who are committed delinquent by the superior courts of juvenile matters for the state of Connecticut.

According to the proposal, 22 Parole Social Workers would be eliminated in order to increase the caseloads for the remaining parole staff, thus achieving a savings of \$1.7 million dollars. The parole services division is made up of 49 staff, in which supervise committed delinquents for the entire state of Connecticut. The proposal does not take into consideration recent retirements, staffing changes or planned retirements for the expected influx of cases related to "Raise the Age" legislation. As of today, 3 Parole Social Work supervisors and 3 Parole Social Workers will retire by July 2011, leaving a total of 37 Parole Social Workers and 6 parole social work supervisors. If the budget is passed and 22 case carrying parole staff are eliminated it would leave 15 parole staff and 6 supervisors to covers the entire state of Connecticut. The increased caseloads will cause a lapse in services and supervision which will lead to youth being incarcerated which will ultimately result in additional costs to the State of Connecticut. At the time the proposal was made in September of 2010, total number of committed delinquents state-wide was 280. However, as of February 25, total number of committed delinquents in the state had risen to 360 and can be attributed to the influx of 16 year-olds from the first phase of Raise the Age legislation. Based on the current numbers, a reduction of 22 staff will negatively affect the second phase of Raise the Age legislation (17 year olds) as it will go into effect July 2012.

Under current DCF expectations, a DCF Parole Officer is mandated to visit with a committed delinquent twice a month along with a visitation to the parent or guardian at the home once a month. A DCF Parole Officer is also required to provide and attend all treatment planning meetings, court hearings, secured transports, school visits, and not to mention transportation for both youth and parent if required, along with writing treatment plans, affidavits and court reports. It is currently anticipated that the second phase of Raise the Age legislation (17 year-olds) will cause an increase of 60%-65% of the committed delinquent population. If 22 staff were eliminated today, the caseload ratio of committed delinquent to parole social worker would be

36:1. If our current number (360) stayed the same and didn't grow, a 60% increase would be 576 youth and 576 families. This increase would make the caseload ratio of youth to Parole social workers in July 2012 64:1. Both of these numbers 36:1 and 64:1 would make completing mandated tasks impossible. Please be aware that CSSD-Probation and the Connecticut Juvenile Training School are currently preparing for the second phase of Raise the Age as they had previously received approval for additional staff.

DCF Parole Services division is the only division being targeted out of 3,000 DCF social workers because we are not a part of the Juan F. Consent Decree, which means there is no federal oversight for caseload size. The current proposal was made by the previous DCF Administration in response to the former Governor Rell's request for a 10% reduction in cost. If you look into the proposal, you will immediately realize that this proposal will only cost the state more money as it was not carefully planned. If 22 parole social workers are eliminated a lapse in supervision will occur and the amount of incarcerated delinquents will significantly rise. Youth being supervised and treated under parole services in the community is cheaper (\$33/day) than youth that are in congregate settings (\$300 to \$500/day). This would also increase the amount of youth incarcerated within the Department of Corrections if arrested for more serious crimes. It currently costs DOC roughly \$90 per day to incarcerate an inmate. Additional costs will also come from the rise of many more youth appearing in court due to new arrests, at the same time negatively affecting the second phase of Raise the Age legislation. Also, the 22 targeted Parole staff are P-2 union members who have seniority over the majority of P-2 social workers, therefore the 22 Parole staff will be bumping into 22 social worker positions. If the bumping occurs, the 22 parole staff would have to be trained in order to manage a CPS caseload. As of 02/25/11, there is only two (2) unfilled DCF social worker positions within the entire state of Connecticut.

DCF Parole Social Workers are a valuable resource to the youth and families we work with and take pride in the services we provide. Less support and services to our youth and families will only lead to additional costs in the future, not to mention the emotional cost to the families. I ask that you please re-examine DCF's budget proposal and analyze its lack of fiscal responsibility and disregard to the possible negative effect to the second phase of Raise the Age legislation.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to read my testimony regarding DCF's proposal to eliminate 22 Parole Social Workers.

Sincerely,

Scott J. Hartan
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